

After the Sun comes out how it alters the World

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After the Sun comes out how it alters the World

by [middlemarch](#)

Summary

That night, the knock on the door comes later...

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

In the distance, a thousand miles away and just outside the door, there were sounds of the guests, dignitaries and Grisha and the music of the Royal orchestra playing a khorovod, the Queen's favorite, a gentle melancholy melody rivalling any valse or menueta. There was gaiety and liveliness, an excess of candles and lace and the flutes of chilled white wine from the lush vineyards of Krym and Sakartvelo. She had prepared for weeks for it and now all she cared about was before her, in a room scented with blue irises.

"So lovely, milaya," Aleksander said against her throat, one hand at the small of her back, the other cradling her cheek. Nothing had made her uncomfortable since she'd kissed him, not the hungry look in his eyes or the edge of the table he'd lifted her onto, nothing until that word.

"Wait," she said and he drew back, leaving one hand lightly steadying her. He was very still, as she noticed he became before he called forth the shadows but there was no darkness in the room other than his eyes and she did not feel the light within her answering him.

"Wait or stop?" he asked. "Whatever you want is all right."

"Wait," she said and saw he hadn't been honest; it would have cost him something dear if she'd said stop though he would have done it and counted the price a counterfeit polushka.

"As long as you like, beautiful," he said. The tenderness of his smile might have undone her except for the endearment.

"You keep calling me beautiful," she said. "It's not true."

"Did Genya tailor you for tonight?" he asked. "Is it that?"

"No, or very little. Nothing a little beet-juice and kohl couldn't have managed," Alina said.

"Then tell me," he said.

"Is this," she gestured at the space between them, letting her gaze linger on his lips and then his eyes, letting him see her own need for him without naming it, "is this because you think I'm beautiful? Because I'm not and I don't deceive myself. I can't and I can't allow you to."

"Do I love you because you're beautiful?" he said, as direct as when he had only been General Kirigan, all command and stride, ready to strike down any threat to any Grisha but most especially anyone who posed a threat to her. "Is that what you're asking me?"

"Yes," she said, willing herself to candor without shame, feeling the weight of the imperial filet Genya had pinned to her braided hair, the gold thread embroidering the kefta and the silk shift beneath it.

"I don't love you because you're beautiful, though you are, Alina," he said. "You aren't beautiful because I love you, though I do."

"Then what—"

“I love you because you are Alina, yourself. I am in awe of the Sun Summoner and I honor her as my peer. I respect the cartographer of the First Army and I very much like Miss Starkov, who never forgets her friends and is loyal and kind and sharp as a whip. I love Alina because she is my dearest, my heart’s desire who had forgotten what it was to have a heart, to desire, to hope,” he said, each word offered up without the least affectation. This was his real voice, the one which had cried out in pain and greeted his beloved in the quiet of a snowy dawn.

“What do you hope for?” she said softly, reaching out her hand to stroke his cheek, to touch the collar of his kefta.

“That you will tell me not to wait anymore,” Aleksander replied. She tilted her head to one side, then nodded. He took her back into his arms, holding her more closely even than he had before, kissing the apple of her cheek, her temple, her throat, and finally her mouth, a different kiss, long without the promise of ending, ardent and unrestrained, letting her feel the shadows rising in him and darkness behind the shadows, the grief that was tearless, voiceless. She tasted it all and gave him the light she carried, allowing him to see beyond it, beyond the Saint and the soldier, the woman who knew she was the only end to the long night for one man, who knew in the long night, he was the one she wanted. When there was a knock at the door, he pulled away only to shout *Not now* and then swept her up into his arms and carried her to the room whose door had always been closed. When he called her beautiful again, she only drew him back to her and said against his lips *more Sasha more*. She did not have to ask again.

End Notes

Title is from Emily Dickinson.

The Russian rubles (RUB) and Belarussian rubles are subdivided into one hundred kopeks. No kopek is currently formally subdivided, although denga ($\frac{1}{2}$ kopek) and polushka ($\frac{1}{2}$ denga, thus $\frac{1}{4}$ kopek) have previously been minted.

The horovod or khorovod (Russian: хоровод, IPA: [xərə'vot], Ukrainian: хоровод, коло, Belarusian: карагод [kara'ɣot], Bulgarian: хоро, Polish: korowód) is an East Slavic and pagan art form and one of the oldest dances of Russia with its more than 1000 years history. It is a combination of a circle dance and chorus singing, similar to the choreia of ancient Greece. The dance was also known in Russia as karagod, tanok and krug. In the Northern Russian regions, the round dance was known for its gentle, restrained, subtle manner, exceptional melody and its peculiar character, as a hint of the gentle, mysterious and strict beauty of the North, despite its calm and decent character, the Northern dances were expressive and emotionally charged. The Northern khorovod stressed the delicate and sensitive side of the Russian soul.

Krym = Crimea

Sakartvelo = Georgia

Both are known for producing wine

valse = waltz (French)

menueta = minuet (Basque)

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